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RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0165  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0162  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0165  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0196  
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 TASHKENT 000361

SIPDIS SIPDIS  
DEPT FOR SCA AND DRL  
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA  
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG  
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PASS TO AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019-03-26  
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [ICRC](#) [KIRF](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [UZ](#)  
SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: RECENT ALLEGATIONS OF PRISONER ABUSE AND DEATHS  
IN CUSTODY

REF: TASHKENT 127; TASHKENT 3; 07 TASHKENT 2181; 08 TASHKENT 1351;  
TASHKENT 55

CLASSIFIED BY: Richard Fitzmaurice, Poloff; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

1. (C) Summary: In the past few months, independent human rights activists and websites have reported on several serious human rights issues at Uzbek prisons, including deaths in custody. Activists also provided updates on the condition of political prisoners Alisher Karamatov and Sanjar Umarov. Though conditions appear to have improved at some prisons in the past year, these reports (not all of which have been confirmed) highlight the need for further improvements. We believe that the most effective way to promote prison reform is to continue to urge the government to reach agreement with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) allowing prison visits to continue this year (Ref A). At the same time, reports from the Uzbek Ministry of Interior indicate that the government has made some progress in using amnesties to reduce the prison population in Uzbekistan, whose incarceration rate is relatively low. End summary.

UPDATE ON PRISONER REPORTEDLY BEATEN TO DEATH

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2. (C) On January 22, the independent Uznews.net website reported on the death of Khoshimjon Kadirov, an Andijon resident who was beaten in police custody in Tashkent (ref B). On March 24, Andijon-based human rights activist Saidjahon Zaynibbidinov reported to poloff being told by an Andijon police officer that Kadirov was interrogated as part of an investigation into what happened to more than 70 firearms that disappeared from law enforcement offices during the violent Andijon events in 2005 and were never recovered. According to the police officer, the investigation was being led by officials in Tashkent, who feared that the weapons could still be in the hand of anti-governmental forces. Zaynibbidinov believed that the police officer's story was

credible, but speculated that the firearms were taken by Andijon residents who participated in the events and then later sold the weapons after fleeing to Kyrgyzstan.

#### REPORTS OF DEATHS FROM TB, OTHER UNKNOWN ILLNESSES

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13. (U) On February 27, the independent Uznews.net and Muslim Uzbekistan websites reported that Sohieb Sidikov, who was sentenced to 17 years' imprisonment in 1999 on religious extremism charges, died of tuberculosis at the Sangorod prison hospital in Tashkent, where he was receiving treatment after being transferred from prison 64/36 in Navoi province. His body was delivered to his family in Kokand on February 23.

14. (U) On January 30, independent activist Surat Ikramov reported that Abdulatif Ayupov, who was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment for membership in Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) in 2000, died of TB at the Sangorod prison hospital in Tashkent. Ayupov reportedly was amnestied in 2004 after contracting TB in prison, but was rearrested in 2006 for HT membership and sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment. In September, he was transferred from prison 64/36 in Navoi province to Sangorod for treatment. According to family

TASHKENT 00000361 002 OF 004

members, Ayupov was forced to work at the Navoi prison despite suffering from TB.

15. (U) On January 22, the independent Uznews.net website reported the recent deaths of inmates Muhammad Artykov, who was allegedly one of the 23 businessmen involved in the trial that sparked the 2005 Andijon events, and Abdurahmon Kuchkarov, an allegedly participant in the Andijon events. Though Artykov appeared to have died from an unspecified illness, the website quoted family members as stating that prison officers had caused Artykov's "disability." Kuchkarov reportedly died at a prison hospital of an unknown illness, despite allegedly being healthy when his family last saw him a few months previously.

16. (U) In December 2007, an official at the Ministry of Interior's Prison Directorate (GUIN) estimated that approximately 1,000 inmates at Uzbek prisons suffered from TB, including its active and inactive forms. The official noted that this number had steadily declined since GUIN instituted the DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment, Short-course) treatment program, widely recognized as the most effective strategy for controlling TB, for inmates in 2004 (ref C).

#### REPORTS OF SENTENCES BEING ARBITRARILY EXTENDED

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17. (U) On January 28, Uznews.net reported that prison authorities arbitrarily extended the sentence of Ibrohimjon Umarov, who was imprisoned for religious extremism charges in 1999 and was set to complete his sentence at the end of 2008, by an additional two years. He was then transferred from the Tavaksay prison in Tashkent province to a prison in Qarshi.

¶8. (U) On March 22, Ikramov reported that Ruslan Jubathanov, who was sentenced to 9 years' imprisonment for disseminating HT literature in 2000, had his sentence extended by another three and a half years after being convicted by the Navoi criminal court of "insubordination in prison" (Criminal Code Article 221) shortly before he was due to be released. Jubathanov's lawyer Rustam Tulyganov was only informed about the lengthening of his client's sentence in March. Tulyganov was not present for any proceedings against his client and has not been provided yet with any indictment or court ruling. During his original trial in 2000, Jubathanov reportedly admitted to distributing HT literature, but denied that he was a HT member. While imprisoned in the town of Kagan in Bukhara province, he allegedly contracted TB.

#### REPORTS OF PRISONERS BEING ABUSED

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¶9. (U) On January 31, Ikramov reported being informed by family members that Alim Boymatov, who was imprisoned for membership in HT

TASHKENT 00000361 003 OF 004

in 2006, was routinely abused at prison 64/33 in Qarshi by several guards. When his mother met with him in mid-January, Boymatov complained of mistreatment, poor conditions, and a lack of adequate food and medicine. His mother has appealed to the Human Rights Ombudsman, the Prosecutor General's Office, and the Prison Directorate, but has yet to receive a response.

#### UPDATE ON CONDITION OF POLITICAL PRISONER KARAMATOV

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¶10. (U) In January, Jizzakh-based human rights activist Bakhtiyor Hamroyev reported that guards at Sangorod had abused political prisoner Alisher Karamatov. Hamroyev was told by Karamatov's wife Namuna that a prison lieutenant had attempted to force her husband to sign a document stating that he had violated internal prison regulations by praying (Note: Prison officials have accused political prisoners of violating internal prison regulations as a means of denying them amnesty. We know of no formal prison regulations prohibiting praying, but prisoners reportedly have been punished for praying before. End note) After Karamatov refused and threatened to complain to authorities, the lieutenant reportedly forced him to stand outside without his clothes for several hours in freezing temperatures on December 31. Namuna visited Karamatov at the prison on January 16 and reported that he looked thin and was spitting blood. Karamatov contracted TB while imprisoned at prison 64/36 in Qarshi and was transferred to the Sangorod prison hospital in Tashkent for treatment in November ¶2008. The incident was also cited by Human Rights Watch in a February 6 press release.

¶11. (U) Hamroyev recently reported that Namuna was able to visit Karamatov again on March 16 and found that his condition had improved since their last meeting in January. However, Namuna was told that her husband would be transferred soon back to prison 64/36 in Qarshi, and she was afraid that his condition would worsen there again. On January 27, the administration of Sangorod rejected a motion filed by Karamatov's lawyer Giyas Namazov for his client to be released on health grounds, noting that his condition had improved. On March 9, the lawyer submitted another appeal to release Karamatov at the Syrdarya regional court, but has not yet received a response. If that appeal is rejected, Namazov plans to appeal next to Uzbekistan's Supreme Court.

UPDATE ON POLITICAL PRISONER UMAROV

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¶12. (C) On March 12, Free Farmers opposition party leader Nigara Khidoyatova reported to poloff that political prisoner Sanjar Umarov's sister-in-law had visited him in prison again in February and found that his condition was still poor and had not improved since October (ref D). The sister-in-law reported that Umarov could barely stand and spent most of their meeting lying down. According to Khidoyatova, Umarov's AmCit wife had applied recently for an Uzbek visa from the Uzbek Embassy in Washington, but has not yet received a response. On a more positive note, Khidoyatova reported that her sister Nadira had completed her suspended

TASHKENT 00000361 004 OF 004

sentence and could now apply for an exit visa to travel abroad. Nadira is a Sunshine Coalition co-founder who was convicted of tax evasion around the same time as Umarov in 2006. Her prison sentence was commuted to a suspended sentence upon appeal. Nigara Khidoyatova also expressed interest in traveling abroad, but noted that Uzbek authorities have so far refused to grant her an exit visa.

UZBEK GOVERNMENT REPORTS LATEST PRISON AMNESTY FIGURES

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¶13. (U) Authorities announced in January that 10,000 prisoners had been amnestied in 2008, reducing the current prison population to 38,000, an incarceration rate of about 138 prisoners per 100,000 persons (Note: In previous years, some prisoners were released after amnesty, while others have had their prison sentences reduced. It is thus unclear how many of the 10,000 prisoners were actually released from prison in 2008. End note.) At a recent workshop hosted by the Uzbek Human Rights Ombudsman, the Minister of Internal Affairs reported that authorities have amnestied more than 200,000 prisoners since 1997 and had reduced the prison population by 30 percent over the last five years. The MIA also reported that Uzbekistan currently has 47 correctional facilities, including 36 prisons and prison colonies and 11 pre-trial detention facilities, which, in total, have a capacity to hold approximately 56,000 prisoners.

COMMENT

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¶14. (C) Without direct access to Uzbek prisons, it is impossible for us to determine the extent to which these cases are the tip of the iceberg or isolated incidents (notably, though, most the reports involved individuals imprisoned on religious extremism charges, who routinely face worse treatment than other prisoners). Reporting by Ikramov and Uznews.net in the past also has not always been fully reliable (ref E). We will continue to follow such cases as closely as possible. These reports highlight the need for greater prison reform, though there have been some improvements in the past year. We continue to believe that the most effective way to spur additional reform is to urge the government to reach agreement with the ICRC allowing prison visits to continue this year (Ref A).

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